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EDITORIAL

The baby and the bath-water

THERE is always a danger that a reaction against a system which is seen to be wrong, or at least not achieving what it ought to achieve, may produce evils as great in different directions. The French Revolution which was a reaction against absolute monarchy and carried Freedom as its watchword, finished up with the dictatorship of Napoleon. Similarly the reaction against the ways of teaching English which were found no longer to produce the results they had produced as long as English was the medium of instruction, has taken some teachers too far. These methods, based on the assumption that the language would be learnt through actual use, came to be seen to be peripheral and a new orientation was necessary to ensure the incorporation into the language lessons of some of that practical use of the language which had formerly been left to the History, Geography, Mathematics and Science periods. Because the reading about and discussing of matters of general interest in social studies and science —which was quite within the powers of students who had been learning everything through English—came to be too difficult for their successors who did not, voices are being raised to ban content from the advanced lessons. For the same reason we hear that literature must be strictly kept out of the language course. It is as if the time available for a carpentry course were to be reduced and we were to notice that the pupils could no longer produce the fine pieces of furniture they had been able to produce before, and we were then to cry out that wood was too difficult a medium for them to work in. "Let them concentrate on using their tools alone, without the distraction of all that tough and unrewarding wood to dismay them!" we can imagine ourselves crying. Yet, of course, carpentry without wood is no longer carpentry, and language without content soon ceases to be a tool to move the mind around. If we cease to call for any exertion of the mind at all while we are teaching a language we shall soon find standards declining at a still more catastrophic rate. The discipline of facing toughness and over-

coming it—at first, under guidance—is an important part of any educational process.

We must remember that the decline in the standards of English in India is a complex matter. The decline is not only due to the abandonment of its use for practical daily tasks of understanding and expression; nor have we finished when we add to this the reduction in the amount of time available for it, and the lack of opportunities, nowadays, for hearing the language from English people. At least as potent a factor in its decline is the decline in its prestige as a language for use in India. Apart from the political attacks it has been subject to, it has been blamed by some educationists as the chief source of all India's educational ills. With English as a medium twenty years gone from most schools and many of the ills still with us, we may question the more extreme of these views, but we must still admit that there was a great deal of ignorant snobbery connected with the use of English and we can be glad to be rid of that; in particular, we need not regret the loss of that superior attitude of the devotee that delights in difficulty and complexity for its own sake, or parades it as a sign of belonging to an inner circle. The reaction has gone too far, however. One of the most important tasks facing the English teacher of post-independence India is to build up a new prestige for the language based on affection for its usefulness and beauty, for the monuments of the human mind that can be approached through it, based on its actual qualities and not on the accidental association which the language once had with the rulers of the country. In this we are on safe ground because the true appeal of the language has always been based on its intrinsic value, on the knowledge and thought available through it and on its literature. Other values, and with them some of the prestige of the language, were unreal or temporary.

We must concentrate, and avoid non-essentials; we must organize the language material we present, and intensify our methods of presentation; but we must not fall into the error of thinking that organization and economy are everything. The structural attitude to language teaching is valuable, but it is not a method of teaching; it is only a method of arranging language for teaching, as we tune an instrument for playing, but only to begin playing when we have finished tuning it. Some teachers beat their breasts—crying woe—and say that all interesting use of the language must be abandoned; literature must be avoided; there must be nothing but mechanical repetition of one structur-

al point after another; nothing new being attempted until the previous point has been fully mastered; language learning must be a barrack-square discipline. This is a distortion of the whole meaning of the structural approach to language. The structural organization of language is a healthy and necessary reaction against the excessive pre-occupation with vocabulary control that preceded it. Both are healthy and necessary reactions against indisciplined and uncontrolled presentation of unorganized and unintegrated masses of language in indigestible lumps. We must see that difficulty is approached gradually, and that new language tools are carefully prepared for and learnt, without the distraction of other irrelevant difficulties being met accidentally during the learning process. We are going too far if we say that two new language points should never be presented simultaneously—very often the one supports and helps the other—nor are we entitled to grind away at each point until it is learnt before we go on to anything fresh; the necessary practice of a point recently learnt can quite well be left to a subordinate role in sentences designed to teach something new. If dullness and structural organization are inseparable then structural organization must go; a language is learnt through interest and what the psychologists call a favourable mental set; the prestige of the language and delight in learning it have a very important part to play in building up this favourable attitude. No language course can survive dullness. If the teacher remembers, however, that the material of language teaching is life itself and language the instrument, an instrument to be carefully prepared and applied and then to be used with greater and greater skill on more and more experience of life, he will not find that structural organization of a language for teaching is incompatible with interesting use of the language.

The baby may not be thrown out of the bath with the bath-water. The discipline of approaching strangeness through a foreign language and catching shreds of delight in our nets is not to be abandoned because what used to be approached and caught has become shy and distant. We must find new, more accessible quarry. We may have to give up teaching Milton's "Sonnet on His Blindness", or Wordsworth's "Ode to Intimations of Immortality", but that does not mean that poems full of concrete imagery or attractive rhythms, such as Wordsworth's "Daffodils", or Tennyson's "Blow, Bugle, Blow", need be abandoned. Here, as in so much of the difficulty and challenge of language teaching,

there is no clear-cut, easily understood and universally applicable rule. We have to use our brains and commonsense and not tip over on our backs to avoid falling on our noses. For those who like to use their brains all the time and approach each problem with a fresh mind, this is no hardship. For those who like to apply ready-made formulae in their teaching, to put the responsibility for success or failure in their work on some distant potentate such as a D.P.I. or Education Minister, these words will bring no comfort, but let them see and ponder that language is a living growth, a part of human behaviour ; the pupil must not only have something valuable and wonderful at the end of his course, but know that he has it. For the teacher it is wonderful to know he has given it.

THE ART OF PLAY WRITING

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PART III

Beginnings and Ends

Every play has a beginning, a middle and an end. This may sound a rather obvious platitude, but for the purpose of construction such a division is helpful, as each section provides its own special problems and demands a special technique.

The beginning of a play is like the beginning of any social function, it consists of introductions. When the curtain rises we are confronted by a number of people we have never met before, and we have to get to know them as quickly as possible. We need to learn their names, their background and their situation, and our interest in them must be aroused.

Before this can be done we have to decide at what point in their history we are going to raise the curtain. This starting place is called the point of attack. The most usual point of attack is the point at which the first of a series of crises is looming up on the horizon. We begin at the beginning, finding our characters in very much their normal state. But they must not be too normal or the first impression they will make is that of dullness, and so they must be already feeling something of the pressure of a new situation. As one experienced teacher of drama has put it, "Fill your kettle with water that is already warm." This is the method used in most of Shakespeare's plays.

There is however another method and that is to start in the middle of the crisis and then work backwards and explain it. This is the method used in *Hamlet*. It has two great advantages. One is that it shortens the story and cuts down the number of scenes. The Bible is a great source-book of stories to dramatise and many teachers have tried to dramatise the story of Joseph only to find themselves bogged down by the length of the story. Here is an example of a story needing this more unusual treatment. It is easier to start near the end when Joseph is an Egyptian overseer and his brothers who sold him as a slave come all unknowing to beg his favour. Here we can see the other advantage of the method; it is dramatic and exciting and packed with suspense. The disadvantage too is apparent; it is a difficult method, and needs considerable technical skill to make it effective.

Having fixed the point of attack we now embark upon the Exposition. This consists of the introductions. It is surprising how easy it is to bring someone on to the stage and leave the audience in ignorance as to who they are, even for the length of a whole scene. Characters must as a general rule be introduced as quickly as possible and the problem is how to do it without boring the audience.

The Chinese classical drama found a very simple solution. The characters would come on one by one and introduce themselves to the audience. The Greek method was to make use of a Chorus to act as a prologue. Shakespeare sometimes used this method. He also used a soliloquy as in the case of *Richard the Third*. All these methods are simple but they are unrealistic and undramatic.

Other more realistic expedients have been tried. One old favourite method was to start with two servants gossiping about their employers. This has been given up nowadays, partly because people in the West no longer have a household of servants, and also because it was dull and obvious. When technical devices become so obvious that they can be recognized by the audience they no longer serve a useful purpose. Another device is to start with the arrival of a visitor, in which case introductions all round would be speedy and natural. Better still is the market scene showing a gossiping crowd which is joined by a stranger, or someone in ignorance of the situation which is causing a stir. This is not only natural but interesting and is the method used in *Julius Caesar*. Best of all is a scene which begins with an illustrative action. An excellent example of this is the opening to *Romeo and Juliet*. The play starts with a street fight. It is intensely exciting and immediately arouses the interest and curiosity of the audience. It also sets the whole background of the play which is the mutual hatred of the rival Houses of Montague and Capulet. Another example of this technique is to be found in *Hamlet*, which begins with the appearance of the Ghost.

The entrance of the hero or heroine is a feature needing special attention. In some plays he is brought on to the stage immediately. Sometimes he is found already on it when the curtain goes up. But this is only advisable under certain conditions. His first appearance must be effective, but if no one knows who he is such effect is lost. He should not only be recognized but he should immediately arouse interest ; thus we should search for some characteristic and illustrative action that he can perform. It is interesting to compare *Richard the Third* and *Richard the Second* in this respect. In the former play the leading

character opens the play with a soliloquy. This is not only dull, but it takes some time for the audience to realise just who the speaker is. Nevertheless, this soliloquy does make clear two things, Richard's isolation, and his jealousy. In the latter play we see Richard in all his glory as a king. There can be no doubt in our mind as to who he is. It immediately sets the key-note for the play, i.e., the fall of a man from so great a height to so great a depth.

There are many cases however where these conditions are not possible. If such is the case we must postpone the entry until we have prepared sufficiently for it. We must build up a good entrance for him. Other characters will speak about him just enough to arouse curiosity. Too much should not be said as the audience finds it difficult to be interested in someone they have not seen, but hints can be dropped to whet the appetite. Then a situation needs to be created which will give him an effective entry, a situation to which he can react in a characteristic way. *Othello* and *Hamlet* make good studies of this. The problem is how long to hold up the entry. It is possible but unusual to hold it up for nearly a whole act. The longer you hold it up the less you are able to have him on the stage. There is no rule for this, and it is a question of seeking for the moment of maximum effect.

There are a few short points which still need to be made with regard to exposition. First assume complete ignorance on the part of the audience. So often vital information is not given because the playwright who is soaked in the story forgets that the audience has not his advantage. This is especially true in the dramatisation of Bible stories. Secondly make the names, relationships and basic facts of the situation clear quickly but hold back the emotional details and give them bit by bit. Never give important information within the first five minutes. The audience may still be arriving and settling down or they will be taking in the costumes and the stage set, and not paying full attention to the dialogue. Never let A tell B something that he must know that B already knows if the real object of doing this is to inform the audience. This is an example of technique creaking. Lastly try and arouse the audience's curiosity in discovering the facts before you hand them out on a plate. This is part of the technique of good teaching!

When the main exposition is over—small doses of it probably need to be given throughout the play—the first scene should move speedily on to the first crisis and the curtain should come down either with the crisis having arrived in which case the audience

will strain forward to know what will be the result, or it can end with the crisis still on the other side of the door, and everyone still in suspense. Postponing the problem of dealing with the Middle, or bulk of the play to a later article we will move on now to examine the End. It is important to know all about the End before we start as we have to spend the whole play preparing for it.

If we think of the story as a tangled skein, there are four ways of ending it. We can unite it. That is we can clear away all the misunderstandings that have arisen and resolve all the conflicts. Secondly we can tie the knot, in which case the play is likely to end with wedding bells as the parted lovers come together again. *The Merchant of Venice* ends with a combination of both. Thirdly the knot can be cut as in the case of *Hamlet* though it is not necessary to strew the stage with quite such a profusion of corpses. If this method is adopted the death must be artistically "right", it must not just be an easy way out for the playwright. Lastly the skein can be left ravelled but with the means of unravelling it open to anyone who cares to do so. It is not usually a satisfying ending, but there are types of plays where a question mark is the only honest conclusion possible.

The end should never be obvious, but it must be prepared for. It can come as a surprise, but on looking back one should be able to see just how and why it all turned out like that. It must always be in character and this is especially true when the end depends upon a spectacular conversion. Characters can be converted but the cause of the conversion must be convincing.

Most plays end with a short moment of quiet, a calming down after the climax is over in which the knot is tidily dealt with. It is a moment for reflection in which the author has a chance to underline the theme, and provide a telling curtain line which will go on ringing in the audience's ears when they are well on their way home. Other plays end with a bang, and this is a good method for ending a comedy. A tragedy such as *Hamlet* needs a calm and dignified close. Whether the ending is sudden or slow, it is worth spending a good deal of time in thinking out what that last line will be.

EXERCISE

1. Write about 300 words of dialogue for the beginning of a play, showing the method by which you will handle the exposition.

2. Write about 150 words of dialogue leading up to the entrance of a chief character.

PART IV

Maintaining the Interest

Once the curtain has gone up on a play the interest of the audience must never be allowed to flag. It is fairly easy to have a few exciting scenes, but to grip the attention for the whole two hours demands considerable skill on the part of the playwright.

We must now consider in more detail just what it is that creates the tension, this straining forward of the audience's imagination.

The chief ingredient of tension is suspense, and this itself is created out of different techniques. The first of these is the correct arrangement of incidents. These should be grouped to form an interesting and varied tension graph (see Part II) in an ascending scale when viewed from their emotional and dramatic value. It is important to avoid having too big a scene near the beginning of the play, as it turns the rest of the play into an anti-climax. This perhaps is what has happened to *Julius Caesar*.

Another way of creating suspense is to foreshadow important events. The anticipation of an event can create more emotion than the event itself, as for instance in the case of a visit to a dentist! "Coming events cast their shadows before," and in tragedy especially these shadows with their hint of fatalism can double the effect. It is worth while studying *Julius Caesar* to find out just how the murder of Caesar is foreshadowed.

Irony is a common method of foreshadowing. (Irony can be used in different ways). It can be comic as in the case of Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice* when he says he would rather see his wife dead than the Jew should have his revenge unaware that his wife is present to hear his remark. Irony can also be tragic as in the case of Caesar's last speech where he says "I do know but one that unassailable holds his rank" and we all know that his hearers are about to murder him. Another good example is Othello's "My life upon her faith. Honest Iago, my Desdemona must I leave to thee."

Shakespeare makes a wide use of portents to create an atmosphere of suspense. The storms of *Julius Caesar*, the witches in *Macbeth*, the ghost in *Hamlet* all increase the tension. In this scientific age we may hesitate to use portents, but atmosphere is still important. It is worth reading Synge's play "Riders to the

Sea" to see how powerfully he uses the atmosphere of the sea and of the weeping of the women as a background to the play.

There is one more common device in the creation of suspense, and that is the use of interruption. You can build up an emotional scene between two or more people, and just before the crisis is reached you can introduce an interruption such as the ring of a telephone, or the arrival of the vicar! The audience will then strain forward all the more to the resumption of the argument. An example of this is the Porter scene in *Macbeth*. Here is an interruption which holds the tension at breaking point for a much longer time than would be possible otherwise and a contrast in comedy which seems to retain it without breaking the tension.

This brings us to another all-important method of retaining the interest and that is the use of contrast. There must be contrast of every possible kind. There is the need for contrast of character. It is not enough to contrast the hero and the villain. The hero must stand out in contrast to his friends, and the friends themselves must be contrasted. Then there is the contrast of scenes. In some scenes the tension will rise, in others it will relax. Some scenes will make the audience laugh, while others will make them want to weep. Some will excite, and some will be romantic. We must not be put off by the names "Tragedy and Comedy". These names indicate the final resolution of the plot, but the best comedies often have moments which draw tears, and tragedies can be enlivened with moments of humour. How rich in contrast is the romance, the humour and the near tragedy of *The Merchant of Venice*. How much the difference of humour between Polonius, the grave-digger and Osric help to hold the audience's interest in *Hamlet*.

There is a special danger in writing religious plays. People are often afraid of introducing humour and the plays lack contrast and so become deadly dull. To avoid this some playwrights try to introduce comic scenes which are really quite separate from the main stream of the drama. In how many Christmas plays have the comedy of the Shepherds and the raging of Herod "stolen the show". Humour should never be introduced for its own sake in a straight play, it should never be an "extra", otherwise the play degenerates into a variety show. Humour should either come out of the action of the plot or out of the characterisation. It should be used as a method of relaxing the tension. The test of a humorous scene should always be "does it help or hinder the play as a whole?" This is after all the test of every effect.

Reversal of fortune provides another type of contrast, a contrast embedded in the story. Such a reversal can be gradual as in the case of Hamlet, or it can be sudden as in the case of Shylock. It can be comic as with Malvolio, or tragic as it is with Richard the Second or Lear. Antony's great speech in *Julius Caesar* is a good example of a reversal of fortune gripping both the crowd on the stage and the audience.

This leads to another form of contrast that is very easy to overlook, a contrast between an empty stage and a full one. There is a temptation to overload a play with duologues and this must be avoided. Duologues, small groups and crowds help to keep interest alive. Contrast must also be shown in the dialogue, but more of that later.

A third very important way of preserving the interest is by providing plenty of action. Action there needs to be of some kind all the time, else the play will stand still, and that is fatal. The action needs to be both mental and physical. In *Julius Caesar* for instance we have the physical action of a crowded market followed by a quite different type of action in the triumphal processional entry of Caesar. Then follows the intense mental activity in the wooing of Brutus and the preparations of the plot. It is good to alternate the different kinds of action. The stage must not be still for too long and characters must not be allowed to talk without doing anything for any length of time. A few authors of genius like Shaw may do things that ordinary dramatists dare not do, and a play with all mental action and very little stage movement is a headache to a producer who has to invent artificial stage "business".

Lastly, if interest is to be sustained there must be clarity. If the audience finds any difficulty in following the plot it will soon stop trying to follow and go to sleep. One of the aims of technique is to make the play quite clear. It is very easy to lose the wood for the trees and so everything that does not forward the plot or clarify the theme should be cut out, and everything else brought into a very direct relation to it. Apart from this the chief method of clarification is emphasis. The important actions and sentences must be emphasised. It is astonishing to find how much an audience can miss even when emphasis is given. There is usually so much going on at once on a stage, and the audience cannot notice everything at one sitting, and they do not often have the chance or inclination to see the play again.

One method of emphasis is that of repetition. This can be done by a simple question such as "Who told you that?"

"Thomas Royds" "Ah Thomas Royds!" just a short picking up of the reply. Or it can be done on a big scale and form an echo that rings right through the play. An example of this is the word "Blood" in *Macbeth.*

Another kind of emphasis is that which depends upon position. The first and last remark in any scene has great natural emphasis, so has the entrance or exit line of any character. Take for example Duncan's remark "He was a gentleman on whom I built an absolute trust" which is immediately followed by the entrance of Macbeth. What irony and what emphasis! It is a good study to look up all the first and last lines of the scenes and especially the Acts of *Macbeth* and see how Shakespeare has given significance to them. The reason for this is that an entrance and an exit create a pause and it is during the pause that the line takes its effect. A curtain creates a much longer pause, and that is why curtain lines, i.e. lines that bring down the curtain, need to be chosen with such care.

One other form of emphasis is that of contrast. It is the contrast of Duncan's trust and Macbeth's character that creates the emphasis almost as much as the entrance. A foolish and flippant remark can by contrast heighten the tragic vein running through a conversation, an unexpected serious line cutting through a light-hearted chatter can have a telling effect.

All these technical effects need to be used with economy. They can be combined, and one effect can fulfil many purposes. The porter's scene in *Macbeth* performs many functions. It acts as an interruption, it provides contrast, it relieves tension while at the same time heightening it. A good dramatist will economise his effects just as he economises everything else. A play needs to be tightly written, every word and action being fully and gainfully employed. The test of a well-written play is that nothing not even a word can afford to be omitted or altered in any way.

EXERCISE

1. Write a synopsis of a short scene showing how you would use contrast, foreshadowing and irony.
2. Write a short dialogue working up in suspense to a dramatic exit with a good exit line.

PART V

Characterisation and Dialogue

Characterisation. In the first article of this series it was said that a good play usually starts from character, and the success of

the play will largely depend upon how well the characters are drawn. The audience can put up with a good deal with faulty technique, but if the characters fail to convince or arouse interest, criticism will be merciless.

It is much easier to portray characters in a novel, as the writer is able to describe the innermost thoughts and secret motives of the people he writes about. This privilege is denied to the dramatist who has to find different ways of achieving his objective.

One method of revealing the inner thoughts of a character on the stage is the use of soliloquy. There are two kinds of soliloquies, the kind that is used to impart information and the kind that is only the character thinking out loud. The first is an easy form of exposition, and the character is really talking to the audience. In Goldsmith's plays all disguise is dropped and the actor really talks to the audience. This is a very good comic effect and is constantly used in *Music Hall*, but it breaks the illusion of the stage and it is not a good technique for serious drama. The other form of soliloquy, which Shakespeare used with great effect in *Hamlet* is much more justifiable, and in a poetic drama can be of great value. Only in a realistic play is it inadvisable for the simple reason that people do not as a rule carry on long conversations with themselves aloud, though they might easily come out with an odd remark. Sometimes a soliloquy can be overheard with telling effect as for example Malvolio's soliloquy in *Twelfth Night*. Such things do occasionally occur in real life and so the soliloquy need not be entirely abandoned.

Another easy way to reveal character is to get two other people to gossip. Much can be gathered from gossip, but it is an unfortunate fact that gossip on the stage about stage characters is not nearly so interesting to listen to as real gossip about real people. Therefore this method must not be used too much.

A third way of revealing character is the use of a confidant. A confidant is a friend to whom the character can freely reveal his thoughts. It is interesting to study the part Horatio plays in drawing out the character of Hamlet. He is a good listener and helps Hamlet to go on talking by asking questions and murmuring ejaculations such as "E'en so". At other times he explains Hamlet to others, and being an intimate friend he has a right to do so with some authority. We also learn much about Hamlet in seeing his relation to his friend. His admiration for Horatio's character, and his confidence in him emphasises his shrewd judgement of character, his distrust of others and his own loneliness. Most important of all Horatio provides Hamlet with situations against which he can react. We often show more of the truth about our-

selves when we react to what others do to us, than when we take the initiative ourselves. We are introduced to Hamlet as a sombre and philosophic figure, but when Horatio tries to stop him from following the Ghost Hamlet draws out his sword and cries "By Heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me." Here is a glimpse of that other Hamlet who was the first to board a pirate ship. Later, when Hamlet has heard the Ghost's message and his mind is reeling from the shock Horatio is there to catch his "wild and whirling words".

A confidant is not enough, and the more the dramatist can surround his character with different types of people the more the different facets of that character will come to light. To some people we will show one side of our nature, to others we will show another. This is why duologue is not necessarily the best way to draw out a character; a varied family circle may be more effective.

Characters reveal themselves primarily through action. "What I do speaks louder than what I say" is very true of the stage. Hamlet reveals his character by pretending to be mad, by hesitating to kill his uncle at prayer and by leaping into Ophelia's grave. The playwright should think out as much characteristic action as is possible for all his characters, not just the hero.

Entrances and exits may be treated as actions. These can be made in a very characteristic way. There are a hundred ways of walking into a situation and walking out of one. The whole atmosphere and character of a situation can change when a person enters or leaves the room and this is a powerful indication of the impact such a character makes on others.

In many plays the dramatist seeks to portray the development of a character, and this raises many problems. Real development usually takes a longer period of time than that normally covered in a play. There are plays that cover a lifetime, but they are not very common or easy to write. Development of character more usually indicates a drawing out of concealed aspects of the character under pressure of some situation. Othello's character for instance is altered because the jealousy, which was always innate, is drawn out and inflamed. Real change is possible but there must be an adequate reason for it. Passage of time is not enough. It is a sobering fact that time alone changes us very little. Something must happen to us. Macbeth's character changes under the combination of several powerful events. There is the prophecy of the witches to inflame his ambition, there is the murder of the king which haunts his conscience which is more sensitive than he supposed; there is the death of his wife which deprives him of the strength upon which he relied so much and finally there is the

prophecy which fills him with false confidence.

In the case of Macbeth the change comes slowly but change can be sudden as in the case of the conversion of Saint Paul a favourite subject of dramatisation among Christians. But such changes are prepared for over a long period. It is as though a volcano was smouldering underground until it reaches boiling point and then suddenly erupts. If such is the case the causes of the smouldering should be made very clear, and glimpses of the growing disturbances should be seen. Conversions therefore should never be easy, they should be well prepared for and be convincing. Different kinds of people are converted in different ways and the conversion must be in character. The conversion should also be demonstrated if possible by some action performed on the stage. A speech is not enough. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

Dialogue. Good dialogue is best learnt by a careful study of the work of those who are masters of it, nevertheless there are a few general principles to note.

Speech should be characteristic. It is true that in Shaw's plays most of the characters speak like Shaw, but then the audience enjoys listening to Shaw. They will not necessarily enjoy listening to us. Each character should therefore follow a speech pattern of his own with characteristic words and turns of phrase. It should not be possible for a producer to decide to transfer a speech to another character without alteration. It should be too distinctive both in language and thought. This is particularly important in writing plays for the Radio where the characters cannot be seen.

Dialogue must also be clear. The names of the characters should be presented clearly as soon as they come on to the stage, and facts and incidents given in a clear order. It is best to limit each speech to the presenting of one idea only.

Dialogue also needs contrast. There should be long and short speeches, rapid staccato passages and slow impressive ones, and these should alternate throughout the play. Different people get excited in different ways. Some show their feelings by becoming voluble, others show them by becoming silent. Another contrast lies in the inclusion of humour. This can consist of conscious wit, or the careless "ragging" of a character. It can come out of the contrast of two characters reacting differently to the same situation, or it can emerge naturally out of the story. Humour should never be forced.

Dialogue in a realistic play should be natural but it cannot be the same as ordinary speech which is discursive and dull. The

dramatist must concentrate and compress so that not a word is wasted. Speech must be heightened so that it is crisp and salty. In some plays it can rise to almost poetic heights but this is a question of style too deep to go into in such a brief article.

Finally, a play is not a sermon. It is fashionable nowadays to write social plays and in most cases the playwrights want to point a moral. It is possible to write morality plays in which case the moral can be presented quite openly with as much force as possible, but morality plays have a technique all their own. In an ordinary play the dramatist needs to restrain himself. If he tries to point the moral at the end of the play his effort will be dull, unnatural and come as an anti-climax.

The moral should lie in the whole action of the play, and if it fails to do so it is because the dramatist has not mastered his technique. Moralising arouses the opposition and mental resistance of the audience, or by being platitudinous, lulls it to sleep. A good salty remark flashing out naturally and emphasised by a pause such as an exit or a final curtain, will have a far more telling effect. It is not the multitude of words but the actions that convince, not theoretical ideas, but people.

NOTES ON ENGLISH STRESS AND RHYTHM

By J. W. Spencer
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It is useful for a teacher of English to understand the basis of rhythm and stress, and their function and importance in English speech. This is perhaps particularly so for the Indian teacher of English because when Indian pronunciation of English falls below acceptable standards of intelligibility, as it sometimes does, it is often for *prosodic* reasons; that is to say because the speaker, while perfectly capable of producing all the English sounds with reasonable correctness, has never learnt to speak English with the correct rhythm or to stress satisfactorily the appropriate syllables in long words or in phrases.

It is worth recognising at the outset, before proceeding with any analysis of English speech rhythm itself, that rhythm and stress play a very important part in the perception of speech. In listening to English speech we do not actually "listen" to every sound or syllable with the same perceptive intensity. Very little is yet known about the perception of speech, but it can be assumed

that the hearer tends to concentrate his attention upon the stressed syllables in the speaker's utterance. The rapidly, often indistinctly uttered syllables between the stresses provide a few necessary clues, but it is probable that the central focus of our aural and mental attention is on the peaks of prominence, the stressed syllables. In very simplified terms one may perhaps suggest that the perception of speech involves a continuous subconscious process of selection on the basis of a minimum of clues both acoustic and contextual. The brain presumably takes from the aurally received material just sufficient data to enable it, together with contextual data, to select, by a process so rapid as to be instantaneous, the one "meaning" from all the possibilities. One may observe a similar process in operation at the conscious level when, for example, someone shouts to us from a distance; we may be able to hear only about one-third of the syllables uttered, but this may provide us with sufficient data to enable us, after a few seconds of conscious juggling with possibilities, to recognise the message. If someone says to me rapidly and rather softly, "I'm studying philosophy," the focus of my attention will probably be upon the two stressed syllables "-/st′u/ . . . . /ló/- . . . ." ; a few other aural clues, such as the fact that the stressed syllable/lo/ is followed by an "s" and not by an "l" (which would probably have indicated "philology"), and that the syllable preceding it began with an "f", together with the number of unstressed syllables on each side of the stresses, will be sufficient to enable me to grasp the meaning. The stressed syllables are usually the most significant syllables from the point of view of meaning, especially where the stress occurs on one-syllable words; and the stressed syllables are therefore the nodal points about which perception clues are gathered for the interpretation of speech. Wrongly stressed polysyllabic words, for example, particularly in rapid speech, commonly claim special attention because of their unfamiliarity, thus causing a slowing down of the complex, almost instantaneous recognition process in the hearer, to the detriment of adequate communication; as any Englishman knows who has been misled by the American pronunciation of the word "laboratory".[1]

The rhythm of speech depends on the intervals at which stressed syllables and unstressed syllables succeed each other. Stressed syllables are syllables uttered with relatively intense breath force, and are therefore the result of increased muscular effort. The

[1] The American pronunciation of this word places the stress on the first syllable, whereas the English pronunciation places it on the second. When pronounced by an American and heard by an Englishman it is sometimes interpreted as "lavatory".

airstream which is sent by the lung muscles through throat and mouth for the production of speech is given an extra thrust by the abdominal muscles for the purpose of producing a stressed syllable. In English this additional muscular effort takes place at regular intervals; irrespective of the number of unstressed syllables intervening, the stressed syllables tend to occur at equal chronological intervals. In the utterance "thése are the bóoks that Jóhn boúght", for instance, the first two stressed syllables are separated by two unstressed syllables, the second and third by only one unstressed syllable, and the third and fourth have no syllable between them. Nevertheless, as any fluent speaker of English can test for himself, the four stressed syllables succeed one another at almost exactly regular intervals; the intervening unstressed syllables, if they exist, are fitted into this regular stress pattern. The more syllables there are between two stresses the more rapidly will these unstressed syllables be uttered, so as not to throw out the regular heavy "tread" of the stresses. The peaks of prominence in English speech thus occur with chronological regularity and may, so to speak, be anticipated by the hearer. It is because some languages do not have this rhythm pattern that foreigners occasionally complain that Englishmen "swallow half their words." (The Romance languages, for example, are, from the rhythmic point of view, of the opposite type; and space out their syllables with chronological regularity irrespective of where the stresses fall) What they mean is that in English speech the syllables which do not receive stress are often spoken very rapidly—and sometimes in consequence rather indistinctly—in comparison to the intensity and distinctness of utterance given to the stressed syllables.

Because rhythm is the result of muscular movements, abdominal and pulmonic, it is a very basic element in language. It needs to be taught through imitation and practice from the beginning of the language-learning process. It is not a frill to be added later. The foreign learner of English should never utter a phrase without achieving, as far as possible, rhythmic correctness, and the teacher who uses the oral method should take care always to speak, however slowly or distinctly, with a natural speech rhythm. A child who learns "this is a book" and other phrases from a teacher who, for the sake of clarity, sacrifices the natural rhythm /´— -- ´— / for the unnatural /´— ´— ´— ´— /, giving each syllable equal duration and stress despite the fact that in natural speech the first and last syllables only are stressed, and the intervening unstressed syllables are uttered twice as rapidly—such a child may learn incorrect rhythmic habits which he will only

eradicate with difficulty at a later stage.

English stress is not only isochronous (occurring with chronological regularity); it is also relatively heavy. It is on the whole heavier, for example, than in most Indian languages. It is not always easy to persuade Indian children to put sufficient muscular effort into the production of English stressed syllables. It is useful to encourage them to do this from the start; and after some initial shyness they will enjoy giving English stressed syllables more intensity than is habitual to them in their mother tongue. It should be made clear at this point that heavy stressing has nothing necessarily to do with shouting; we are concerned with *intensity* (i.e. of muscular effort) and not with *loudness*. One way of teaching children to increase intensity of stress in speaking English is to encourage them sometimes to accompany stressed syllables by gestures, such as beating with the arms, striking the desk, etc. The child should be made aware of the existence and importance of stress early in the learning process; not by listening to a theoretical exposition from the teacher, of course, but through practical exercises in stress and rhythm.[1] He will need this consciousness of stress later when he has to learn English polysyllabic words in which the placing of stress on the correct syllable is as important as learning the correct pronunciation of the sounds which together comprise the word. Word stress is, in fact, an integral part of the pronunciation of a word, and must be learnt along with the combination of sounds which compose the spoken form of the word. English polysyllabic words can be difficult for English people to recognise when spoken by foreign speakers, merely because of a misplacement of stress; especially when such words are spoken, not in isolation, but in a rapid flow of fluent speech, where the hearer has little time to juggle mentally with all the possibilities inherent in the unfamiliar combination of stress and sound.

Wisely utilised, poetry can be a very valuable aid in the teaching of English, for a number of good reasons. One commonly stated reason is that poetry is rhythmic, and children enjoy the rhythm of poetry (not forgetting, let it be said, the rhymes too) even if the language and the content are a little beyond them. This is, I should say, perfectly true, and a great deal of potential fun would be taken out of English lessons if poetry were to be proscribed altogether in the early years of English teaching. With regard to

[1] There are excellent exercises in rhythm and stress, with many rhythmic variations in sets of phrases, in W. Stannard Allen's *Living English Speech* (Longmans).

the rhythmic nature of poetry however, a few words are perhaps not out of place here. It would in fact be truer to say, not that poetry is rhythmic, for all speech is rhythmic, but that it is *regularly* rhythmic. In poetry the rhythms of normal speech are organised and regularised, so that the occurrence of stressed and unstressed syllables is patterned and controlled. But only relatively so. Completely regularised rhythm, with no variation, would be intolerable; which is one reason why doggerel becomes so boring to listen to. The efforts of prosodists to codify and classify English poetic rhythms (according, alas, to categories designed for another language, Latin, which had quite a different stress system!) has tended, unfortunately, to create the impression that poetic rhythms are more regular than they in fact are. Many foreign, and indeed native readers of English poetry tend to force more rhythmic regularity into it than is there; the delicate, syncopated flow of poetic rhythm being forced with ruthless unconcern into feet trochaic, feet iambic, feet anapaestic.[1] Often the natural pauses are disregarded, and the fact that stress in poetry can sometimes occur on a pause (i.e. on silence) is completely overlooked. There is not, from the rhythmic point of view, a special way of speaking poetry different from clear prose speaking. Poetry should be read naturally, so that the natural speech rhythms underlying it are not lost. When we read poetry we should forget prosody.

Correct stress and rhythm are important factors making for clarity and comprehensibility in speaking English. Rhythm also affects vowel quality, often causing it to change according to whether the syllable containing the vowel in question is stressed or unstressed. This, however, is a matter which must be left for a later article. In the meantime I would merely reiterate what I wrote at the beginning of this article; that rhythm is a basic factor in all speech, and perhaps a particularly important factor in English speech. It has an importance for comprehensibility which

1 The first line of *Paradise Lost* would probably be scanned as follows by a prosody-minded English schoolboy. "Of ma'n's/first dis'/obe'd/ience' an'd/the fru'it..." This, however, bears no relation to the stress pattern of this line when read with a natural rhythm, which is: "Of ma'n's fir'st dis'obe'dience and the fru'it....." I recommend my readers to try to make an iambic pentameter out of this! Prosody can be no guide whatsoever to speakers of poetry; it hinders rather than helps them in discovering where the stresses should fall. The stresses should in fact fall where they would fall in normal speech.

is not always fully acknowledged by those who place so much emphasis upon sounds that they neglect the prosodies[1] of speech. It is something which is best learnt or unconsciously absorbed early in the learning process, and teachers of English should bear this in mind, especially if they use oral methods of teaching English.

TEACHING A POEM (5th Form)

BY F. L. BILLOWS

IT is not uncommon to hear the opinion expressed that Wordsworth's poem *The Daffodils* cannot be taught in India because no Indian boy or girl has seen or can see a daffodil. This is as if one were to say that no English boy or girl could appreciate Sarojini Naidu's the *Bangle-Sellers;* it is true that an Indian child will have richer associations to support the poem in his imagination, but an English child can enjoy the rhythm and verbal colour as much as any Indian child. As it happens, it is not a matter of argument, for many Indians of all ages do enjoy *The Daffodils* and carry their impression of the poem through life as a treasured possession, and I have had the experience of teaching it to classes recently and satisfying myself that it can still give real delight.

THE DAFFODILS

(*As the text is so well known and available to most teachers, we are not quoting the poem in full*).

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills, etc.

It does no harm to remember that few people have a very strong or accurate colour memory; even those who have seen many thousands of daffodils could not tell you whether a daffodil was light or dark yellow in colour, or whether the trumpet was lighter in colour than the petals, or the contrary. We are certainly not able to see colour so clearly or accurately in the memory as in reality. That is one reason why black and white photography and expressionist painting are acceptable. We are much more keenly conscious of shape than of colour. This means that we can draw a trumpet-shaped flower, with a collar of five petals, on the end of a straight stalk a foot high and assert

[1] "Prosody" is a term used in Phonetics to refer to features of the spoken language which belong to units of utterance larger than the syllable; that is, not *sounds* as such, but features of groupings of sounds such as intonation, rhythm, etc. Prosody as a special subject, referred to in the previous paragraph, is of course the study and classification of rhythm patterns in poetry.

that it is yellow. A yellow book or any other rather bright yellow object will serve to drive home the yellow idea, and assist any defective colour memory, if the teacher thinks it necessary; and as the gaiety of yellow is a predominant theme in the poem perhaps it is. I begin by drawing on the blackboard the silhouettes of some fairly precipitous rolling hills and some clouds above them, wandering along the top of one of them I indicate a speck, the figure of a man, his loneliness immense and evident. I show that he is as lonely as a cloud; we talk of crowds in the streets and the opposite condition of loneliness, lonely streets at night, the loneliness of the sea and of mountains; the liveliness and gaiety of crowds on holiday occasions, the gaiety of colour, suggesting yellow as a gay colour, yellow saris, gold bangles and rings. This may be the best point to draw the daffodil or daffodils; it is quite effective to pin some grass and other wild flowers on to the blackboard below the drawn daffodil, and then draw in some trees to overshadow the lot. I then draw in a lake, with a bay or bays, below my hills, talking about it and the bay as I do so, making the lake blue, if I have blue chalk, with a few undoubted waves; I make a smear of white, or yellow, if there is any, along the margin of the bay and along the side of the lake, stretching in never-ending line, using these words, and repeating them over and over again as I industriously chalk in my yellow milky way.

Having set my stage, I start reciting the poem

"I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,"

pointing to the figure on the hill-top, cloud, vales and hills, as I mention each. The word float needs no explanation at this point, its meaning is sufficiently clear from the position of the clouds in the drawing. A lump of cotton wool pinned on to the blackboard is amusing for a cloud.

"When all at once" (shading the eyes with the hand ludicrously and gazing into the distance, as I say the words).

"I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils", (I leave the word host unexplained, to be equated, for the moment, to crowd)

"Beside the lake, beneath the trees" (pointing to them, beside the lake beneath the trees).

"Fluttering and dancing in the breeze" (showing some leaves outside the window fluttering and dancing in the breeze, or

not doing so at the actual moment, but evidently capable of doing so, if there were to be a breeze).

"Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay" (in spite of the familiarity of the word I insist on pointing to the margin of a book, to make the picturing clear). We talk for a moment, if we didn't do so in the introduction, about the milky way and I tell them to look for it that evening.

"Ten thousand saw I at a glance" (he saw ten thousand at a glance. How many did he see? Millions; but he could perhaps only see 10,000 at a glance).

"Ten thousand saw I at a glance
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance". I toss my head and get enough pupils to toss their heads similarly to establish the point. Then I get one boy to dance and another, if possible, to outdo him in the liveliness and gaiety of his dancing, and repeat the words as they do so, pointing to them.

"The waves beside them" (pointing to the waves on the blackboard) "danced; but they"

"Outdid the sparkling waves in glee;"

"A poet" (and here I point to the figure on the hill-top once more) "could not but be gay" (could only be gay)
could not but be gay.

"In such a jocund company" (jocund needs no explanation here).

"I gazed—and gazed—" (here there's no harm in a little exaggeration, to the point of burlesque, of the gazing. The poet is, after all, supposed to be gay).

"I gazed and gazed but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought."

I refer to the gold of wealth and the daffodils, showing that this wealth is mental wealth, gold in the mind and in the mind's eye. I lie along the top of the teacher's desk, or any other substitute for a couch, and look first blank with a zanylike vacuity, and then portentously pensive, when suddenly I see the daffodils on the blackboard, coming like a clap of thunder to my eye—

"For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;"

I look at something with my actual eyes and then shut my eyes and tell the class I can now see it with my mind's eye or inward eye. I get several members of the class to shut their eyes and tell me what they can see with the inward eye. We agree that the bliss, delight, joy, bliss of solitude is what we can see with the inward eye of the imagination.

"And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances"—here I dance capriciously—
"with the daffodils."

After this I read the poem several times over, at first rather slowly, pointing to the various details on the blackboard as we come to them, but afterwards rather dramatically without referring to any visual imagery by word or gesture. When I judge that the class can understand the poem, and they show that they can remember most of it by their ability to take up and complete half-finished lines, I let them open their books and read the poem silently, more probably the period is by now over, and I tell them to read the poem over at home and look up in the dictionary any words that have been left so far unnoticed, or that they have not quite grasped. In the next few lessons I simply read the poem through or recite it once or twice and perhaps ask the class to tell of sights they have seen which have been memorable to them in the same way, and talk about it in general.

A few weeks later I may return to the poem, recite it, and get members of the class to read verses over. When I have brought it once more to the mind in this way, I ask them each to write a composition using the same structure as the poem. Their ability to do this successfully shows their grasp of the essentials of the experience given in the poem, and at the same time brings the poet's experience into their own sphere for the enriching of their own experience. One of the form may contribute a composition starting as follows :—"I was riding along one day on top of a bus going from Secunderabad towards Hyderabad by way of Begampet, when I saw on the left of the road a mass of water hyacinths, stretching along beside the lake, covering the whole of the meadow as far as I could see" etc. If the memorable sights recorded are not pleasurable we can refer to the words "bliss", "joy", "pleasure", "gay", "glee" etc. We may not have been able to bring any actual daffodils into the class-room but we should have been able to be gay and bring dancing and a wealth of delight into the class-room.

THE HUMAN BRAIN
AND
THE LEARNING OF SECONDARY LANGUAGES[1]

BY WILDER PENFIELD, O.M., M.D., F.R.S.

IN MY previous broadcast I referred to the human brain as the "master organ". The learning and the use of language might be called the major skill of this organ. After all, the chief difference between a man and other animals is that the man can speak. It is by the spoken word and the written word that the ignorance of childhood is changed into the understanding knowledge of educated men and women.

Animals come into the world endowed with certain brain reflexes that provide them with what seems to be racial memories. These apparent memories, which we call instincts, serve to guide them in their house-building, migration, mating, pursuit of food. But such instincts are strangely lacking in us. If we did not teach, and if we could not learn, we would be more helpless than all other creatures.

Speaking, and the understanding of speech, also reading and writing, depend upon the employment of certain specialized areas of one hemisphere, the dominant hemisphere of the brain. When a baby is born these speech areas of the cerebral cortex are like a clean blank slate, ready to be written upon. There is an optimum age within the first decade of life when these special areas are plastic and receptive. I pointed out in my previous broadcast that speech units, which may be employed in the later expansion of vocabulary, can be "deposited" as it were with ease in the nerve-cell mechanisms of these areas at this early age.

The method of teaching children their mother's own language has been the same in all lands and in all ages. It is extraordinarily efficient. It conforms to the changing capacities of the child's brain. We may well call it the mother's method. It has been used by servants and tutors in the home to teach one, two or even more secondary languages from the beginning of history even though educators today do not generally employ the method in schools.

The mother's method is simple. Even before he understands, the mother talks to her child. And while he is learning he is listened to (usually I may say with delighted admiration). Language is for him only a means to an end, never an end in

[1] Second Broadcast, New Delhi, February 1957, with kind permission of All-India Radio, (External Services).

itself. When he learns about words he is learning about life, learning to get what he wants, learning to share his own exciting ideas with others, learning to understand wonderful fairy tales and exciting facts about trains and trucks and animals and dolls. One secret of the success of this method is that it is employed while a child is forming the speech units in his eager little brain.

A child who hears three languages instead of one, early enough, learns the units of all three without added effort and without confusion. I have watched this experiment in my own home, as many of my listeners may have done.

Our children heard only German in the nursery because they had a German governess. At the age of 3 and 4 they entered a French nursery school. With their parents and others outside the school and outside the nursery, they heard English.

It was a conditioned reflex for those children, on entering the schoolroom, to utilize the language units of the French tongue, a conditioned reflex on meeting the governess to use German units. There was no confusion.

After 2 years in the French nursery school they entered a regular English school. Here some years elapsed, too many perhaps, before French and German were presented to them as regular secondary languages. But they found the work easy and their accents were good. Hidden away in the brain of each were the speech units of those languages, waiting to be employed in the expansion of a vocabulary.

Of course, there is nothing new in all this. The experiment succeeded. But not all households can include a governess. If public education is to incorporate in the curriculum secondary languages, the curriculum should be planned according to the changing aptitudes of the human brain. When new languages are taken up for the first time in the second decade of life, it is difficult, though not impossible, to achieve a good result. It is difficult because it is unphysiological. The learning is no longer direct. Instead, the speech units of the mother tongue are interposed.

In this new day of nationalism and freedom, educators seek, quite rightly, to make education available to all. Higher education is organized for those who have the wit and wish to enter academic and professional life. But unless the mother's method is introduced into the schools, a majority, even of those who are taught, will continue to fail to master any language but their mother tongue.

Bilingualism is not a handicap to a country. It has been a great benefit to mankind and multilingualism also. The language

of Greece served the Romans very well as a second language for centuries, and, both Greek and Latin, were lamps in the great darkness of medieval Europe until the time of the Renaissance. Then, through these two secondary languages, the light of bygone days flooded the minds of men, who woke, as though from sleep. Latin and Greek, like Sanskrit, are now dead languages, much prized by scholars but largely useless for practical purposes.

Today, access to Europe's past, and to the world's present, is only possible through a European language. We in the Commonwealth of Nations are well served by the English tongue for that purpose.

The time to begin what might be called a general schooling in secondary languages, in accordance with the demands of brain physiology, is between the ages of 4 and 10. The child sets off for school then and he can still learn new languages directly without interposing the speech units of his mother tongue.

Suppose we discuss a hypothetical day-school in the bilingual community that I know best, that of the city of Montreal and the province of Quebec. A million citizens in Montreal have French for their mother tongue, and less than half that number English. Suppose the school is located in an English-speaking section of the city. Let the first years then from nursery school and kindergarten on to the grades for children of eight or ten years, be conducted by teachers whose mother tongue is French.

The French teachers must speak only their native tongue in school, at work and at organized play, with never a word of translation. Thus the little ones would begin their years of normal play, drawing, singing and memorizing, in French. They would be taught no language as such, but the teachers would "get on" from fairy tales to folk literature as rapidly as the child's mind is prepared for it. These children would have been hearing Mother Goose stories and such things at home, and their play at the weekends, as well as the home discipline and religious observance, would have been carried out in English.

Two or three years of this might well be enough. If so, they could be rotated then into a school or department conducted in another secondary language as desired. For all I know this might be carried out with one language in the morning and the other in the afternoon since in any case the entrance into the morning class would be a conditional reflex that started the child in the one language while the entrance into the afternoon class might be a continuing reflex for starting him into the second language.

At the age of 8 to 10 they would graduate perhaps into a school conducted in the mother tongue. There they would carry on with

all the subjects of a normal curriculum. This would include, in time, courses in literature of those languages in which their earliest schooling had been presented. They would turn to those subjects effectively and without accent.

During higher education it will always be desirable that some students take up new languages at a later period and there is a good deal of evidence that he who has learned more than one language as a little child has greater facility for the acquisition of additional languages in adult life.

I make no plea for any particular language anywhere. But if this method were to be employed in this country in areas, for example, where the mother tongue is neither English nor Hindi, teachers would have to be found who could conduct the first years in Hindi, others perhaps in English. They need not be specially trained in language teaching. After those primary years it would matter little what tongue was used in subsequent teaching. The growing child could later expand his vocabulary in any one or in all these languages with relative ease.

My plea is simply that educators and parents should give some thought to the nature of the brain of a child, for the brain is a living mechanism, not a machine. In case of a breakdown, it can substitute one of its parts for the function of another. But it has its limitations. It is subject to inexorable change with the passage of time.

In the words of the unknown writer of Ecclesiastes: "To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under heaven:

"A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted."

* * *

"A time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance."

The human brain specializes in the learning of languages before the ages of 10 to 14. After that, gradually, inevitably, it seems to become rigid, slow, less receptive. In regard to this function it grows old all too fast. But it is ready for life's fulfilment in other ways, ready for reasoning, self-discipline, understanding, and at last there comes, for all of us, a time of Wisdom.

THE "STRUCTURE" METHOD OF TEACHING ENGLISH

(*Some Suggestions*)

BY KALYANI KARLEKAR

THE MAIN PRINCIPLE of the "structure" Method of teaching English, like that of all teaching, is selection and gradation, but

its practice should not be absolutely mechanical.

I believe that, given a good standard of teaching, it will not be possible to make the pupils stick to the structures taught. I do not mean by this that the order of the introduction of the structures may be varied according to the discretion of the teacher but that, if the pupils are enthused and enjoy their group practice, they will develop new forms out of the given structures. The teacher should not feel embarrassed at this, nor should he make a fetish of an absolute standard of English. As a matter of fact, I feel that such natural aberrations and variations should be taken as necessary conditions in the successful application of "God's own method" of teaching English.

Moreover, Indian English may be accepted just as Australian or American English is. Careful students will find traces of it even in the Deepak Readers. I should, therefore, allow the pupils the latitude of varying the structures within reasonable limits trusting to time and practice for the stabilisation of their skill.

The structures recommended by the All-India Council for Secondary Education have been carefully selected and graded according to utility and difficulty, but the different vernaculars used in different parts of India as well as the different social backgrounds may make variations in these grades necessary. Children used to Bengali may not find the same English structures easiest as would children with Tamil as their mother tongue and, given local backgrounds for the teaching of English, the vocabulary also, may need to differ from state to state. Teachers of English, therefore, should use the recommended structures as guides for research and development instead of being enslaved by them.

Then I should like to disguise quite a lot of uninteresting drilling. The need for practice in structures should not reduce the teaching of English to a drill-master's job. Drilling, like the human skeleton, is most effective under cover of living skin and muscle.

Repetition, there must be, to consolidate learning, but this can be achieved by transfer to different materials and plenty of such materials should be provided in class. I should recommend a three-prong approach in this. Firstly, the ground should be prepared by oral work. Plenty of conversation on pictures and situations should lay the foundation for the introduction of the Reader. The second step would be consolidation through these Readers and the third, expansion and application of acquired

skill by working on new materials. The new materials should be graded, according to class, from picture composition through supplementary readers of simple stories to simplified versions of great literature.

Another change I should like to see in the present-day application of the structure method is of the approach to English wholly through an Indian background. It would be far more interesting to learn about peoples and countries along with their languages than to dull the keen edge of imaginative curiosity on the millstone of routine.

The fact that, in course of time, the use of English by Indians will be more and more in the international rather than in the national field should serve as an additional argument in favour of creating an "English" atmosphere in the English period. In using the three-prong approach suggested before, the oral groundwork may be laid in the Indian background, then the material in the Readers may involve comparative descriptions and the supplementary reading may consist of stories of English-speaking peoples. This may be done for the first three years in a six years' English course and, in the next three, the core of the reading texts being common, the supplementary work may be varied according to groups of elective studies chosen by the pupils. This supplementary reading should not only be divided into groups, but also allow variations within groups according to subjects chosen.

Lastly, no discussion on the teaching of English can be complete without considering the teaching of poetry. Poetry should not be left out because it cannot be provided within the framework of given structures. A via media may be proposed between the late Mr. Gatenby's emphatic "Thou shalt not" and Mr. Billows' dramatically suggestive technique (which is, any way, beyond the capacity of most teachers). Poems may be graded approximately to the nearest group of structures. This would give the pupils a general understanding which can be enhanced through pictures, dramatisation, suggestion etc. A completely literal comprehension should not be aimed at. (A check on the literary intake of adults would show how much more people depend upon general appreciation and interpretation than on words for word grasping). Poems, however, will grow old along with the pupils and become clearer with the passage of time. Many will drop them on the wayside but the traces will remain in their minds and their language habits.

WHAT IS THE ASSIGNMENT METHOD?

By S. H. Best

Regional Representative, The British Council, Madras

The Secondary Education Commission Report, in an eloquent and persuasive passage on "The Value of Activity Methods" states that it is the business of the teacher, amongst other things, "to plan the programme of work in such a way that pupils will have varied and ample opportunities for self-expression in speech, writing, collective reading, independent research, constructive activities and other projects that bring the hand and mind into fruitful co-operation."

The recommendation applies equally to teachers in colleges, though, with some change in emphasis. It is evident that college education must be more academic in character and that "independent research" must play an increasingly large part. A graduate should be so educated that for future study he will have no need for guidance from lecturers but can find his own way in an independent course of study.

The problem facing high school and college teachers is how to change their methods to produce the results urged on them by the Secondary Education Commission. The tradition has been that the teacher is active while the pupils are passive, the teacher gives out and the pupils absorb. The main concern has been "to cover the portion," and it is the fear that by adopting new, and to them untried, methods they will fail "to cover the portion" that has prevented many conscientious teachers from trying to make changes in an endeavour to secure the results considered necessary by India's leading educationalists.

The use of individual assignments is one way of effecting some of the changes, but before proceeding further with an explanation of the method, I would forestall an objection, which may be raised by some college lecturers (for I am hoping that this article will interest them as well as high school teachers). I can imagine them saying "High school teachers with classes of 40 may be able to give individual attention to their pupils, but I have classes of 80 in the Pre-University year, and classes of 120 or more in the B.A. English classes. How can I hope to use individual assignments or give any appreciable amount of attention to individual students?"

It would be foolish to pretend that there is any easy answer to such a question, but some answer must be found, or the present decline in standards, which is generally deplored, will be accelerated and not retarded. There can be no doubt that the all too

prevalent reliance on dictated notes or on bazaar texts is failing to produce the trained personnel needed by India at a time of rapid development and that the term "university education" cannot be used in connection with much current practice.

The answer most likely to be effective is the division of the class into small groups of about 15 students, each under the leadership of a student with good attainment in English. Each group can be given a different task, so that while the teacher is dealing with one group and giving individual attention to the students in it, the other groups are profitably engaged. The giving of assignments to each of the groups is one way of ensuring that the members are profitably engaged while not receiving the immediate attention of the teacher. The teacher can best judge if the assignment can be worked by the group acting together, or by each member taking a part for individual work under the general supervision of the leader.

To operate this method successfully the teacher needs to do a good deal of preparatory work, but this is his working capital and does not need to be changed until the text-books change. To set a group of 15 students to work means the provision of 15 assignment cards. These may be in several different forms, for much depends on the age of the students and the time at their disposal. In the example I have given below, I am suggesting one or more questions on each card, but each question will require close attention to the text and usually the consulting of reference books, as well as some independent thinking and, desirably, discussion with the other members of the group.

I have taken as my example assignments set on Act I of *Othello*. I have chosen this play because it has been set in the B.A. courses of at least two South Indian universities this year. High school teachers will, I trust, forgive me for giving an example from which they cannot directly benefit, but I am sure that they will soon see how to adapt the method I am suggesting to the treatment of an S.S.L.C. text.

If the lecturer has a class of 75 he can divide it readily into 5 groups, with 15 students in each group, so that each group can deal with an act. Bigger numbers would mean some duplication or more assignment cards. In general I would suggest that the lecturer should open the work on the play with a lecture to the whole class, telling them something about the story of the play. This should be followed by the reading of the play, preferably silent reading in class unless the lecturer is lucky enough to have a number of students capable of reading it well aloud. Each reading should be preceded by a short talk by the lecturer and be

followed by short questions and discussion. The dry-as-dust explanation of difficult words should be avoided at this stage. When this first reading is finished the students should have enjoyed the play and should have a deep general impression. They are, therefore, given the impetus for more detailed study and work on assignments may begin. This work may take at least ten periods, and the following eight periods will be occupied by group reports when each group will give detailed answers to the whole class, dealing with all the questions asked in the assignments. This first study of the play should be summed up by the lecturer in a formal lecture, in which he summarises the most important points raised in the reports.

The time-table so far might be :—

Preliminary Lecture	—	1 hour.
Silent Reading	—	5 hours.
Group Work	—	10 + hours.
Group Reports	—	8 hours.
Summing-up	—	1 hour.
Total	—	25 + hours.

I should expect a good deal of the written work, mainly the preparation of reports, to be done at home and to take at least 10 hours.

When this process is concluded I would suggest that the play be put aside for a time. Study will have been intensive and staleness must be avoided. A fallow period helps the process of absorption. Later a further period of about 15 hours should be given as revision before the examination. This period should consist in the reconsideration and revision of the reports by different groups (the report presented by Group 1 would be revised by Group 2, etc.), more library work and discussion, short quizzes (to be devised by the students themselves) and some revision lectures by the teacher (dealing with the main characters, the structure of the play etc.). Dramatic reading or the acting of passages before the class should be features of this revision, so that the text will be vividly in mind at the time of the examination.

The following are examples of assignments which might be set for the Group which will deal with Act 1 :—

Card 1. What do you learn about Venice—its history constitution, foreign policy? What sort of people are the Venetians we meet? In what year is the action supposed to take place?

Card 2. How many indications can you find in the text that Othello is a Moor? Why do you think Shakespeare has gone out of his way to emphasize this? Consult Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, pp. 199-202.

Card 3. What sort of girl was Desdemona? What do others say about her? How far can you judge from what she says and does? Give quotations.

Card 4. What impression do you gain of Iago in the first act? What is the cause of his grievance against Othello? How does he treat Rodrigo? How old is he? Does he have a sense of humour? Can you believe what he says of himself?

Card 5. What sort of man is Desdemona's father? What sort of house does he live in? How many children does he have?

Card 6. How do you think Othello would say the line, which Bradley calls "one of Shakespeare's miracles"—Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them? What other examples can you give of such poetry as this ? Consult Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy*, pp. 188-189.

Card 7. What can you learn in this act of the story of Othello's early life?

Card 8. Explain the following: the Sagittary, Cannibals, Anthropophagi, his Moorship's ancient, "antres vast and deserts idle."

Card 9. Who said the following, and what do they mean?

(a) "I fetch my life and being from men of royal siege."

(b) "a frail vow between an erring barbarian and a super-subtle Venetian."

(c) "Is there not charms by which the property of youth and maidhood may be abused?"

Card 10. Bradley says that Othello is "a romantic figure". Do you agree? Give reasons, with quotations.

Card 11. How has Shakespeare arranged these opening scenes? Why has he arranged them in this way? Read "Prefaces to Shakespeare" by Granville-Barker (Fourth Series—*Othello*), pp. 13-15.

Card 12. What does Iago mean when he says:—

'tis in ourselves that we are
Thus or thus'?

What sort of a view of life would you think a man has who can say that? Does he say anything else in

the first act which reinforces this?

Card 13. How does Othello part from Desdemona, who he has only just married? How does Desdemona react?

Card 14. How do the Venetians treat Othello? Would you say that they look on him as one of themselves?

Card 15. Rodrigo is referred to as "a silly gentleman". Do you think that is true? Give reasons for or against, with quotations.

This suggested scheme of work involves 40 hours of class-work and about half as much time spent working out of class (doing research, writing reports, memorising passages etc.). Throughout the students will have been active in their study of the play. The teacher, having done the main work of preparation before the students' work began, will be available to give guidance when it is most needed. It will be found that this method of work is intellectually and emotionally satisfying to students, that it encourages co-operation instead of competition, and that as each student has been able to work at his own pace the brighter ones have not been frustrated by being continually held back, and the duller ones have not been discouraged by the feeling that they have been left behind. The results should include better examination results, a happy class, and the satisfaction of the teacher that he has broken the fetters of ineffective "formal" teaching, and that the job of education has been well done.

QUESTION BOX

Question 1. Many Indians use "reach" as an intransitive verb; for example, "I came to see you as soon as I had reached". Is there any justification for this in English usage?

Answer. There is no justification for this use of "reach", it is probably due to the person having originally looked up the word he wants to use in his own language and found "arrive" and "reach" but not noticed that the one is intransitive and the other transitive. If the word is intransitive in his own language he will simply assume that "reach" is too, unless he is observant. This shows the importance of cultivating in our pupils an observant attitude to words.

Question 2. Because the majority of Indians who know English owe their familiarity with the language chiefly to books and very little to regular conversation with English-speaking people, they often tend to use words and phrases which have a literary flavour; in

addition, perhaps because of this, they often lack the capacity for direct, simple statements and explanations. How, apart from actually using the language for speaking to English people, or Americans, can they improve their spoken English in the direction of colloquiality? Are there any good books dealing with simple, direct, colloquial English which can be recommended to students?

Answer Listening to the B.B.C., especially radio drama, and noticing the language used in films are good ways to cultivate the spoken language. W. S. Allen's "Living English Speech" is a good manual of Spoken English and the B.B.C. recordings of their lessons on Spoken English are excellent. "Everyday Sentences in Spoken English", by Palmer and Blandford, has gramophone records to go with it.

Question 3. My pupils continually use the word "keep" when they should use the word "put". Although they are different, the use of "keep" can often be justified where "put" should have been used and I find it difficult to think up an exercise which shows their difference clearly. Can you suggest an exercise?

Answer. Take two books, or pencils, one red and one blue and hold them up. Then say :—

"I'm holding two pencils, one red and one blue. Now I'm putting the red one on the table and keeping the blue one in my hand."

After a few repetitions with these and other objects

"Govind take your left shoe off, but keep the right one on."

"Gopal put both your hands on the desk, now take off your right hand and put it in your pocket, but keep your left hand on the desk. Now keep your right hand in your pocket and put your left hand on Govind's back, but don't keep it there if he doesn't like it."

"Now, Govind, which hand did Gopal keep in his pocket and which hand did he put on your back?"

"He kept his right hand in his pocket and put his left hand on my back."

"Did he keep his left hand on your back?"

"No, he didn't, he took it off again after a few seconds," etc.

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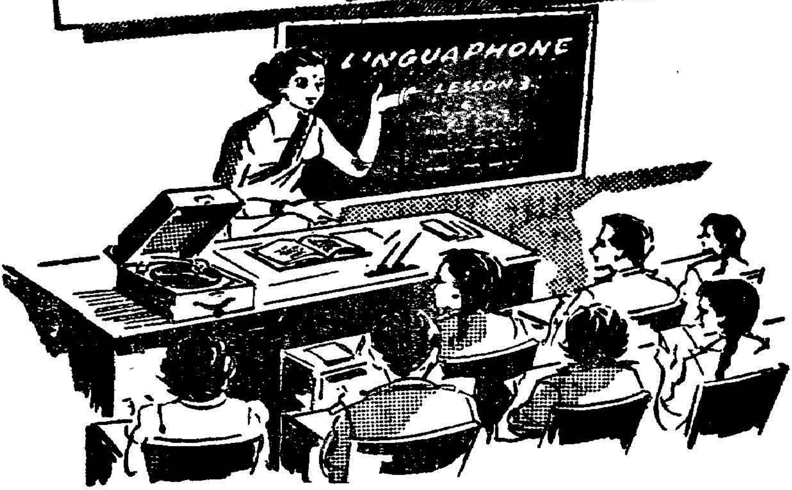

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